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ARMED FORCES

AFGHAN COUNTERREVOLUTIONARIES INCREASINGLY DISILLUSIONED

Moscow KRASNAYA ZVEZDA in Russian 22 Oct 83 p 3

[Article by KRASNAYA ZVEZDA Special Correspondent Col Yu. Teplov: "Undeclared War"]

[Text] First I will speak about a man whose picturesque appearance remains in my memory to this day. Against a background of cliffs and huge boulders -- black beard and long black hair, wearing a sleeveless sheepskin jacket, with an automatic rifle and a little flower in his hand -- that is how Malang looked and how I best remember him. Although later he looked entirely different.

However it is not possible to write about Malang without telling about another officer -- an officer, erudite and expert on the Koran and the history of Afghanistan. Only here is the problem. For completely understandable reasons his name must still remain a secret, and therefore it must remain concealed behind the pseudonym of Tsagol-Akhmat.

January had come, mild and snowy. Tsagol-Akhmat thought that the weather was no good at all for the rebels [dushmani]. The mountains were bleak and the snow clearly depicts any track. It was an unhappy time for Malang and his minions.

The people had been told about a meeting and were coming. The women came, concealed in their yashmaks, with and without children. The men walked apart from them. With his trained eyes Tsagol-Akhmat noticed that some had weapons concealed under their clothing. It was such a time that even a peaceful peasant might be armed. And perhaps also on an unpeaceful one? How can they be identified at a meeting of residents of four villages [kishlak] -- Udkheyl', Kabil'bay, Bazukheyl' and Puli-Sangi?

"Comrades!" Tsagol-Akhmat began, appealing to those present. "Citizens! You see that we have strength," and he pointed at the Afghan army battalion standing in formation. "But we do not wish to shoot. We do not want either your blood or that of your relatives who are hiding in the mountains."

How could he convince these people who, with rare exceptions, had never held a newspaper in their hands, that the Saur revolution was carried out for them? How could he tell them the word of truth about the aims of the people's

government, if day after day they are told again and again that it is the handiwork of the devil and a curse of Allah?

He began to read a verse [sural] from the Koran by heart which could be interpreted as a call to love of one's fellow men. He glanced to the left where the imperturbable old men had gathered in a separate group. He noticed that here and there one of them nodded his gray beard in agreement. Then he met the gaze of a new man who had imperceptibly approached the elders and was totally unlike them in age. He had a black beard, hair to his shoulders, was dressed in a leather jacket crossed with slings, and had weapons hung all over himself. He looked at Tsagol-Akhmat penetratingly and even with a certain challenge.

Tsagol-Akhmat began to speak, talking to him alone, face to face. The people understood. There was a rustle of whispers and silence when Tsagol-Akhmat began to tell about the atrocities carried out by the bandits who called themselves the defenders of Islam. The man did not hold his gaze, but looked at the people, turned around suddenly and calmly left.

After the meeting Tsagol-Akhmat asked the old men:

"Who was that?" He was not surprised when he heard the answer:

"Malang."

So it was him, the bandit chief, a man known to have incredible courage, who had been able to bring iron discipline to his band of cutthroats. He appeared at the meeting in broad daylight, showing no fear of the troops.

"I want to meet him," said Tsagol-Akhmat.

"We will tell him."

They were to meet in Udkhey1, but Malang did not show up. Tsagol-Akhmat thought that he should have detained him at the meeting. But how could he have? It would not have been possible without shooting, which would have meant bloodshed to entirely innocent people. Moreover, KhAD [expansion unknown] had information that Malang had gotten all over his bandit colleagues and a neighboring band for plundering one of the villages. Sometimes it's hard to understand oneself, let alone the deeds and character of another man.

Tsagol-Akhmat was sitting in his office thinking about this when the duty sergeant entered and reported:

"There are two men asking for you."

"Let them in."

"They are armed."

"Just the same let them in."

Tsagol-Akhmat did not expect Malang of all people. He appeared in the door and immediately walked to the desk, leaving his companion at the entrance.

"You are taking a chance," said Tsagol-Akhmat.

"So are you," answered Malang, nodding to the other man.

The man was standing with a gray cloak thrown over his shoulders. It had a slight bulge on the right side and Tsagol-Akhmat understood that a gun was trained on him.

"Let us put our guns away," he said to Malang. "Otherwise our talk will not be worthwhile." He unfastened his own holster and lay his pistol on the table.

"Put it away," Malang ordered his bodyguard, and the latter took his hands out from under his cloak.

"What education have you had?" asked Tsagol-Akhmat.

"Ibi-Sin Lyceum."

"How many people do you command?"

"Three hundred."

"Don't deceive me. There are barely over two hundred. Perhaps even fewer now."

"There will be more in the Spring."

"And what are you fighting for, Malang? Do you follow Gul'beddin?"

"No, I travel my own road. For the honor of the people."

"Why don't you let the people live in peace?"

"That is what I came to talk about. I want to know who to believe. I want to know why the Russians [Shuravi] are here."

"When did you go into the mountains?"

"During the Amin government."

"And what Russians were here then?"

Malang fell silent.

"Where did you get your military training?"

"In Peshawar."

"Who taught you?"

Malang did not answer immediately. Tsaqol-Akhmat also remained silent in expectation.

"American and Egyptian instructors trained me."

"Do you rule out a possible overt intervention?"

"I don't know."

"Well, you have just about answered one of your questions yourself. And now about the people's honor. Do you know how long Kabul has been without heat and electricity?"

"I know."

"By whose order did those such as yourself, the defenders of Islam, blow up the power transmission line supports?"

They talked for two hours. Tsaqol-Akhmat noticed that Malang's bodyguard even forgot about his role and moved forward to catch every word. They talked about the land and the water, of which there was so little in Afghanistan and which the government had given to the peasants. They talked about the schools which were opening and about the fact that the bandits [dushmani] are burning them and killing the teachers.

Malang stood up and walked about the office. Then he said:

"Come to my place to talk further. You won't be afraid?"

We will return to these people and to their next meeting, but will now move ahead in time.

Before I met on Afghan soil with Tsaqol-Akhmat and Malang, the comrades from the BAKHTAR Agency gave me the opportunity to become acquainted with a number of materials which characterize the situation in the republic and shed light on the sources of counterrevolution and on what these "defenders of Islam" represent.

They are a rather motley rabble numbering from 15 to 25 different groups. One of the most reactionary is the IPA, the "Islamic Party of Afghanistan," which is led by Khekmatiar Gul'beddin. His rival for the role of "first fiddle" of the counterrevolution is the "descendant of the prophet Muhammad," Sayyed Akhmad Geylani, leader of the "National Front of the Islamic Revolution of Afghanistan." Also figuring is the so called "Movement of the Islamic Revolution in Afghanistan" led by Mukhammad Nabi, whom Gul'beddin, owing to their personal discord, called a "defiler of Islam." There are also other groups, each of which is prepared to devour the next, if only to cut off a fatter piece of the pie obtained from overseas.

Yes, it is namely the overseas pie, valued at over \$100 million annually, which is the power that unites them.

And now let's look at a portrait of those who lead the counterrevolution. Gul'beddin: black beard with a very strong face and the penetrating eyes of a fanatic. That is how he looks on the leaflet printed at his headquarters in Peshawar. He has reason for his fanatic hatred of the new government. He is the son of a landowner and is himself a landowner who studied in the engineering faculty of Kabul University. He lost all his privileges in the April Revolution. Geylani: Descendant of a very old family as he himself asserts, linked by blood ties with the royal family, a clergyman and business man who previously had a Peugeot dealership in Kabul.

There is no sense in rooting through the biographies of all the bandit leaders. It is clear that they are all from the clan of the former feudal and bureaucratic elite of the old regime or the most reactionary members of the religious cult. But whereas in the past not even in their thoughts would they permit stepping over the line dividing them from the peasants, today they are forced to flirt with their "brother Muslims," and even deal with those who earned their living during the old regime by robbery on the caravan trails. How could it be otherwise? A leader without his gang is nothing.

Those who comprise the majority of the members of the bands hiding in the mountains are a different subject. Many of them were "mobilized" forcibly under the threat of death or reprisal against their relatives. I met with repentant and even imprisoned bandits. One of them, Malik-Aga, told of how his former confederates slaughtered a family in the Dzhabal-Sarach village because the men refused to go into the mountains.

Besides those who were forced to become bandits, there are also many who are truly misled. Revolution always breaks up the old structure and concepts, and that process of breaking does leave its mark on the people. Where is fairness to be found? Where is truth?

Tsagol-Akhmat thought that the educated Malang belonged to the latter group of people. He accepted Malang's invitation although he understood that it was not at all safe to go to the band. But he also knew that many of those who were hiding in the mountains are not the enemies of the people's government at all, but are ordinary peasants who were merely stupefied by lies, slander and force. It is for those people that it is necessary to fight before it is too late. And only one small life is at risk in this case. What is that in comparison with the future?

"Thank you, Malang, for complying with the old man and coming to see me," Tsagol-Akhmat told him. "I will also come to see you."

No one would recognize him in that garb, as even I didn't know him although I had just the day before seen Tsagol-Akhmat in the uniform of an Afghan Army officer. He looked like an old man with a tousled gray beard, wearing a dirty gray robe and turban.

He and two companions walked along the trail to the designated place. Already from a distance they saw Malang and three others with British rifles standing on the side of the trail. Tsagol-Akhmat got a piece of rope from under his clothing and threw a noose over his neck. He pulled out a clump of grass from the side of the trail and put it in his mouth. His companions did the same.

The Pushtoos have a custom. If even a blood enemy comes with a noose about his neck and a clump of grass in his mouth, to kill him would be a bad sin. The grass means he cannot say anything and agrees in advance with any accusations made against him. And the noose means please hang me if you must, but Allah will punish you for it.

"I have come," Tsagol-Akhmat said to Malang.

But they did not exchange greetings. Rather he turned to the left where the old men whom he had told at the meeting of his desire to meet with Malang were sitting cross-legged. It is also a custom to first make a gesture of respect to the old ones, and only then to the young, no matter what position they may hold. The old men pompously nodded their heads in satisfaction, responding to the greeting: a man does not shun the laws of his ancestors. And again a bit later they exchanged approving glances. This was when Malang walked ahead of Tsagol-Akhmat and his companions with an armed bandit behind each of them. It is a terrible feeling when the barrel of a gun is nearly touching you in the back and, although you really don't believe it will happen, you can't help but wait for the shot. Tsagol-Akhmat jumped out to the side of the road, stood up and told Malang reproachfully:

"Your people don't know the unwritten laws. Why does he want to step on the footstep of an elder?" He pointed to the oversized lad with the rifle walking behind him. "Why does he want to interfere with my road to heaven?"

Malang turned and said a single word and the three disappeared.

I do not know whether I would have begun to write about Malang, or about someone like him if I had not come across a report in the newspaper WELT. Referring to "diplomatic sources," it informed its readers about battles, fires and destruction in Kabul. This slander was revealed and along with it the aims which this false report served. It is advantageous for Western propaganda to fan the flames. Here dear reader, they say, are facts which show that the situation in the country is getting worse, and that the people are against the lawful government.

The facts, unless they are just made up, prove exactly the opposite. I met and talked not only with Malang, but with at least 10 other men who no longer wanted to oppose the people's government.

On one of those days in the republic capital a dzhirga was held. It is a Congress to which former bandit leaders were invited. Some 265 men assembled for it. They frankly acknowledged their errors and talked about how they could make it up to the government.

When one becomes better acquainted with these people's biographies one can't help but begin to feel how difficult and confusing everything was for them.

Nasrulla is the son of the leader of one of the tribes of Khazareytsy and is himself a leader. He is 28 years old. He obtained primary education in his home village of Uruz-Gani and completed the lyceum in Mazari-Sharif. He was dressed in a gray European suit over which he had thrown a green robe. I planned to ask him just two questions: Why did he rouse his tribe against the people's government (under his command are no fewer than 20,000 men), and what caused him to make peace with the government and even organize a self-defense detachment? But it turned out that there was no simple answer for what had appeared to me to be simple questions.

Under the old regime the Khazareytsy were the nationality held in most contempt. Therefore they settled apart, far from the major cities, and felt blind hostility toward the powers that be. The Saur revolution took place without their participation or sympathy. What difference does it make who is in power? However, it drew even the Khazareytsy into the maelstrom of events. Not taking into account the ancestral tribal structure, it interjected its new laws which their consciousness was not yet prepared to accept. The old leader, Nasrulla's father, understood them as just one more encroachment on his tribe and on his personal power. One evening he was summoned from his home. He never returned. His brother, Khadzhi Gulyam-Mamad, dispatched couriers to all the villages stating: The tribe has been terribly aggrieved and custom commands vengeance! And they all went into the mountains.

But time destroys even the cliffs. One piece of information after another penetrated their closed world from the major roads -- the peasants in Puli-Khumri set up a rice cooperative and the government helped them with seeds; an amnesty was declared for those who give themselves up; a representative of the Khazareytsy entered the government and supposedly even headed the Cabinet of Ministers. This last report was so unreal that it was decided to check out the rumor and secret envoys were dispatched directly to Kabul. They returned and confirmed that it was all true.

Indications of the future are appearing more and more clearly through the complexity of the post-revolutionary period, and positive changes in people's lives and consciousness are becoming ever more profound. This creates frenzy in the leaders of the counterrevolution and probably even more in those who inspire it. And it has long been no secret that the biggest inspiration comes from the Reagan Administration. It was not by chance that U. S. Secretary of State Schultz, visiting in Pakistan this summer and seeing the training camps of the Afghan counterrevolutionaries at Peshawar, told them: "We are with you."

Pentagon chief Weinberger's visit also made the Peshawar bandit headquarters happy. No doubt this is logical since American instructors in these camps are among those teaching the art of killing, demolition and pillaging. The same Malang and Nasrulla took military training at Peshawar. So, by the way, did most of the participants in the Congress.

The interference by Western powers in Afghanistan's affairs is continuing. I was present at the trial of Filip Ogayyar [phonetic], a Frenchman. Although there was considerable compromising information, the Afghan government, taking into account his noble profession as a doctor, found it possible to grant amnesty to this spy, who had maintained that he was not involved in politics. Most recently information appeared in the press that soldiers of the Afghan Army had destroyed a bandit caravan and uncovered the body of an Englishman among the dead with documents in the name of Stuart Bowdmen. The equipment, documents, diary notes and letters found on him implicated him fully in espionage activities. It was also established from them that special spy groups are operating under the cover of the officially registered "Gulf Features Service," in London and the French "International Medical Aid " (AMI). Ogayyar was involved with the latter.

Well, and what about Malang? What was his fate?

At our last meeting I saw him in the uniform of a captain in the Afghan army. Having accepted the ideas of the revolution with his heart and mind, he switched over to its side along with his people. They comprise the backbone of one of the battalions of the "Commando" brigade, and are now actively fighting against the forces of counterrevolution. Tsagol-Akhmat is the most welcome guest in the battalion.

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